

Cp 970.75
T45

THE STORY OF FORT FISHER

BY

MAJOR LEONARD R. THOMAS

The Library
of the
University of North Carolina



Collection of North Caroliniana

G970.75
T45

UNIVERSITY OF N.C. AT CHAPEL HILL



00032744629

FOR USE ONLY IN
THE NORTH CAROLINA COLLECTION

Preface

In November, 1864, the Ninety-seventh Regiment was with the Army of the James in its intrenchments on the north side of the river confronting Longstreet's corps, also in intrenchments from four to six miles from Richmond. The opposing picket lines were everywhere within hail of each other.

The Ninety-seventh had just passed the third anniversary of its organization, October 29th, with four hundred and eighty-three on its muster rolls. Some sixty or seventy of these were all that were left of the three hundred and thirty-seven re-enlisted veterans. The remainder had all been killed or wounded in that bloody summer of 1864. The Regiment had lost over five hundred from May to November that year. The original commissioned officers had been killed, wounded, or mustered out at expiration of term except Col. Galusha Pennypacker, who, with four wounds on his body, was, and had long been, in command of the 2nd brigade, 2nd division, 24th Corps. His old regiment was a part of the brigade.

We had lost a host of our best and bravest that summer on the lead swept lines that invested Richmond and Petersburg, and November 1st, 1864, nearly all the companies were commanded by their first sergeants, though on or about December 1st, some six or seven sergeants received commissions as lieutenants. Colonel Pennypacker was the only field officer and the reduced number of the rank and file did not permit the muster of an additional officer of that grade.

But we were still the Ninety-seventh Regiment, bound together by our great traditions and impelled by the same spirit of enduring courage that had carried us through the ten weeks under fire in the trenches before Fort Wagner in 1863, made us go forward to certain slaughter at Bermuda Hundreds, charge up to the fire girdled Confederate works at the battle of the Petersburg Mine and meet unfalteringly the sure daily losses in the deadly picket duty on the Petersburg lines which was a feature of that summer's fighting.

The regiment had been wrought to a mettle which made it quick and vigorous in attack and gave it strong endurance under fire. That it was all that has just been claimed, was soon to be proven in the crowning battle and victory of its career at Fort Fisher, fought January 15, 1865. That Sunday was a never-to-be-forgotten day to all who survived the battle, and the memory of that afternoon of stern strife down by the Cape Fear has remained indelibly stamped upon the consciousness of all who passed through it. The lapse of fifty years has not dimmed that memory in the mind of the writer, and as January 15, 1915, will be the fiftieth anniversary of the battle, all of which he saw and part of which he was, he has written this story. L. R. T.

Ocean City, N. J., January 1, 1915.

The Story of Fort Fisher, N. C.

January 15, 1865

As told by
Leonard R. Thomas

Major, 97th Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers
One of the Survivors of that Bloody Battle

One of the most brilliant in the long list of Union victories was the capture of Fort Fisher, North Carolina, at the mouth of Cape Fear River, Sunday, January 15, 1865, the last year of the Great War. With the exception of Bentonville and the closing operations around Petersburg it was the last great conflict of that war and the interest centering about it, both because of its importance in Grant's plans, and because of the brilliancy of the action itself, was so great that even now, after the lapse of fifty years, the story of the battle will, it seems to me, be interesting, not only to other survivors of that bloody struggle, to relatives and friends, but to the general public as well. I have therefore set down from personal recollections and a few notes made at the time, the story of Fort Fisher, as it comes to me over the years since 1865.

The part that the capture of Fort Fisher played in Grant's plans has often been told and need not be given in detail; nor is it necessary to do more than speak of the location of the Fort, commanding, as it did, the entrance to Cape Fear River, making it both a perfect protection for blockade runners, and a defence to Wilmington, thirty miles above. A brief reference, however, to the structure itself may help to a clearer understanding of the battle.

Federal Point is the name of the narrow sandy peninsula which extends below Wilmington between the Cape Fear and the coast. For the last five or six miles of its length the Point is not in any place more than two miles wide, and was, at the time of the conflict, covered, in some places, with pine woods. But towards its southern end there were shallow swamps and a low tangled growth of cedar scrub oak and pine, to within a half mile or less of the

fort. My recollection is, however, that the last mile and a half of Federal Point was mostly bare and open beach, with a treeless swamp next the river. On this open ground the great fortification stood, with its land face within a mile of the extreme southern end of Federal Point.

Fort Fisher was constructed of beach sand sodded with marsh grass, and had been built in accordance with its situation and use, which was, as I have said, to control the navigation of the Cape Fear in the interest of blockade running and against a naval attack upon Wilmington.

As any land force operating against it must do so by landing on Federal Point north of the fort and attacking from that direction, the north or land face of the fortification was very strongly built. Beginning at the river, a parapet twenty feet high ran east some six hundred yards to a bastion near the sea, where it made a sharp angle and then ran southwestward thirteen hundred yards, ending in a small work called "Mound Battery." The fort thus had a sea and a land face, but was open at the back next the river. Twenty-four heavy guns armed the sea face and twenty-one the land face.

There had been built on the parapet of the land face, at equal intervals, some twelve traverses, rising ten feet above the parapet, at right angles to its line and extending back twenty-five feet towards the interior of the work. Between these were placed the heavy guns. A high loopholed palisade was in front of the land face. The heavy traverses referred to played an important part in the battle, for it was over them and about their bases that the most desperate fighting took place. The construction of the sea face was similar to that of the land face, but lighter. The garrison consisted of 2,500 Confederate veterans, commanded by General William H. C. Whiting and Colonel William Lamb.

Grant had been intending to take Fort Fisher all the fall of 1864, and had caused to be assembled in Hampton Roads for the purpose, under Admiral Porter, a great fleet carrying more than six hundred guns. This fleet early in December was joined by 6,500 infantry from the Army of the James, but there was so much delay that no attack was made until Christmas Day, and then only a partial one, which failed.

General B. F. Butler, as commander of the Army of the James, had accompanied the expedition, and he, when the

immediate commander of the troops, General Weitzel, reported against making an assault, ordered the land force back to the Army of the James. Grant, according to the army talk of the time, was greatly displeased and blamed Butler for the failure. At any rate, Butler was relieved of his command and ordered to report at his home, Lowell, Mass.

Porter's fleet had remained off Federal Point, the Admiral strongly advising a renewal of the attack, and we had no sooner reached our camps north of the James and renewed clothing and equipments, than Grant ordered us back; the 6,500 detail of the first expedition having been raised by the addition of Abbott's brigade, 24th corps, to 8,000 officers and men.

The quality of this force had so much to do with the winning of the victory that I may be pardoned for attempting a short description of it. No pains had been spared to make it a thoroughly efficient body and none were selected except those of well-known military hardihood. The second division of the 24th corps, commanded by Brigadier General Adelbert Ames, was selected for what we all felt sure would be a bloody task, and of the 5,000 which the division numbered only 3,300 were taken. Ames' first brigade was commanded by Colonel N. M. Curtis, 142nd New York; his second by Colonel Galusha Pennypacker, 97th Pennsylvania; his third by Colonel Louis Bell, 4th New Hampshire. The second brigade was the largest and numbered about 1,500. It was composed of the 203rd, 97th and 76th Pennsylvania and the 47th and 48th New York.

As I recall the names of the regimental commanders in these three brigades, they were: Colonel John W. Moore, of Philadelphia, for the 203rd; Colonel John S. Littell, for the 76th; Colonel William B. Coan, for the 48th, and Lieutenant Colonel Joseph M. MacDonald, for the 47th. Colonel John Wainwright, now of Wilmington, Del.,—and at the time of the battle a captain,—led the 97th.

I cannot recall the state numbers of the regiments composing the first and third brigades and Colonel Abbott's brigade, but the 3rd, the 117th, the 142nd, the 112th, the 115th, the 169th New York and the 3rd and the 4th New Hampshire were some of them.

The other white troops with us were Battery E, 3rd U. S. Artillery, commanded by First Lieutenant John R.

Myrick; 1st New York Independent Light Battery, Captain Richard H. Lee, and one company of the 1st New York Engineers, Captain Charles B. Parsons. Brigadier General Charles J. Paine's division of United States colored troops, 25th corps, were also a part of the force. Major General Alfred H. Terry was selected by Grant to command the expedition.

January 6, 1865, we took transports at Bermuda Hundred, on the James, and by the evening of the 8th had joined Porter at the rendezvous off Beaufort, N. C. We were detained there by stormy weather until the 12th, but by evening of that day the expedition had come together off Federal Point.

✓ The morning of Friday, January 13th, dawned bright, and soon after sunrise two hundred boats from the fleet rowed to the sides of the transports, the landing began, and by four o'clock in the afternoon the entire land force with their ammunition and sufficient rations were ashore on Federal Point, about three miles north of the fortification we had come to take. A section of the fleet protected, with its fire, the landing from any interference by Hoke's division of Lee's army, which was in position on the Point below Wilmington. His pickets were watching the landing from a line just out of range of the navy's artillery.

The landing was made in a heavy surf, and not a few of us got our first salt water bath that forenoon, though without bathing suits. There were no serious mishaps, however, for of all the day's impressions the one that after fifty years remains brightest in memory is the rough kindness of the sailors who were manning the boats. They jeered us for land lubbers, but they gave a helping hand always where it was needed. A soldier astride of a sailor's neck and being carried to land through the surf was a common sight. Scores of these gallant tars fell in the battle.

While the landing was going on, the situation began to dawn upon us. We were soldiers of long acquaintance with the enemy's way of doing things; there we were on an open beach with the big fort on one side and a veteran division of 5,000 Confederates on the other. We had learned in Virginia that Confederate soldiers could always be counted on to make trouble if there was opportunity to do it, and we were not sure that an attack from Fort Fisher with one

at the same time from the direction of Wilmington would not be tried.

But we found that General Terry, with Colonel Comstock, of Grant's staff, and the division commanders had the situation well in hand. They pushed out strong skirmish lines in both directions and under cover of them examined the ground for a good line of defence against an attack by Hoke. By evening one, about two miles from Fisher, was found, extending from sea to river.

In 1864, picks and shovels were as much a part of our business equipment as were muskets, and, though we never liked them, we had become experts in their use. This expedition had brought along thousands of the homely implements, and at nine P. M. on the 13th, we were formed on the line selected by the commanders; the picks and shovels were at hand, and by the morning of the 14th a breastwork capable, if well defended, of resisting any attack had been built. Paine's colored troops, Abbott's brigade and the two field batteries we had brought, took charge of the line leaving Ames' division free to prepare for the service before it.

All day of Saturday, January 14th, Porter kept up a fire on the Fort, while the Army leaders, from a point near the river within six hundred yards of the fort, made their examination of the work. It was decided to make the assault the next day, Sunday, January 15th, at three o'clock in the afternoon, and Ames and his division were selected for the work. The Admiral agreed to silence Fisher's artillery and break down the palisades with the fire of his fleet. He was also to assist, by charging at the hour fixed for the assault, the sea angle of the fort with 2,000 sailors and marines who, next day, were to land for that purpose. Commander Breese of the Navy led them, and the late Admiral "Bob" Evans, who was then a midshipman of eighteen, and who was desperately wounded in the charge, was one of his officers.

As Paine's colored troops were not called upon to fight since no attack was made on their line no further reference to them seems necessary. I commanded a company of the 97th Pennsylvania which formed part of Ames' division so that the attack must be told of as nearly as possible as I saw it while endeavoring to perform my duty as an officer of the line.

Preparing for the Assault

Curtis' first brigade was within six hundred yards of the fort on the side next the river on the afternoon of the 14th and remained there during the night. The second and the third were relieved from other duty during the same afternoon, and ordered to replenish ammunition, fill haversacks and canteens, put muskets in working condition and get all the rest they could.

We had been pretty certain all along, that there was bloody work ahead of us, but when we got those orders, there was no longer any doubt about it. The orders meant battle, that night, it might be, certainly the next day.

But there was no time, and but little disposition to indulge in gloomy forebodings. We thought much more about getting a good supper and some sleep than about the coming conflict. About midnight, the two brigades were moved into a low growth of pine and cedar, ordered to lie on their arms without fires and rest till morning. It was a clear, frosty night in mid January and only experienced soldiers can realize how it was with no fires. It was too cold to sleep, so we shivered through the rest of the night in silence, eagerly awaiting the morning, though all knew that for some it would be their last. All were resolute to win the victory that day, if good conduct could do it.

The morning of Sunday, the 15th, was chilly, but there was a bright sun which was greeted as an augury of victory as we filed into position near the river, in close support of Curtis, who had remained all night in line within six hundred yards of the fort. The movement brought us out in full view of the hostile stronghold and of the navy, which by eight A. M. began its part of the day's work. It was a sight to stir the most sluggish blood and it must remain forever in the memory of every survivor of the conflict.

The surf of the previous day or two had gone down and the sea was almost without a ripple. Sixty war vessels were in three lines just off the shore, all arranged in a mighty curve which enveloped the enemy on the south, southeast, east and northeast.

The admiral had ordered careful aim, and when the four hundred heavy guns in action opened, there resulted a fire which for power and accuracy was both terrible and magnificent. A steady rain of great shells fell upon the

fort, searching every spot on its parapets and in its interior. They came from every side except the west and they were falling and bursting faster than the ticking of a watch. The Confederate artillerists tried in vain to stand to their guns. One by one, these were broken or dismounted, and the garrison driven to their bomb proofs.

During the forenoon, Commander Breese landed his men from the fleet and by one-thirty P. M., they were standing in column on the beach ready for the signal to go forward to their part of the day's task.

On the side of the river, it was exactly two o'clock, when sixty of the 13th Indiana with forty volunteers of Curtis' brigade, all armed with repeating rifles, and provided with shovels,—Col. Lent of the 13th leading,—passed Ames' lines and went forward at a run to within one hundred and seventy-five yards of the fort. Here they quickly covered themselves in a shallow trench in the sand, lay down and began to take pot shots at the enemy who now began to appear on the ramparts and open fire with their muskets.

Curtis' brigade immediately went to within about four hundred yards of the fort, lay down and with tin cups and plates, knives, sword blades and bayonets partially covered themselves by throwing the sand to their front. Pennypacker's second brigade came close to Curtis, Bell's third brigade following him in close support.

Soon Curtis again advanced at a run to a line close behind the sharp-shooters, Pennypacker followed to the line just vacated by Curtis and Bell came to within two hundred yards of Pennypacker.

On paper, the movements which have just been referred to look commonplace and quite in the line of a soldier's business, but death was busy in our ranks all this time. For the veteran marksmen on the hostile ramparts were active with their muskets, and their fire began to bite in the second and third brigades even while they were wading a waist deep and icy cold swampy pond distant some six hundred yards from the fort, and it became deadly while we were forming line on the positions from which the final advance was made. Here a number of officers fell with many of their men, but there was no faltering in that veteran division and all were intent upon coming to grips with the task before them.

The Assault.

We had not long to wait under this fire. It was three twenty-five o'clock when General Terry signalled the navy to direct its fire on the sea face of the fort and ordered Ames to send his infantry in to the attack, the men of the navy charging at the same moment. They were, however, quickly repulsed with severe loss, for the enemy drew together a strong force at the sea angle and ran forward a couple of light guns whose double charges of canister with the heavy musketry were too much for the brave blue jackets and marines. They were compelled to draw back out of the fire. The enemy had assembled so much force to oppose this gallant advance, that they left their lines thinly manned on the side next the river, and while the yelling Confederates were shouting victory and asking the sailors why they did not "come aboard," the men of the army had broken into the fort. For when the word came to advance, all three of the brigades rose alert from the ground, officers and color bearers ran out to the front, the men pressed close after them and all rushed for the west end of the land face. The first brigade from its position had the lead, but the color bearers of all the regiments strove to see who should first arrive, so that the charge became a race over the last two hundred yards, which were passed on the run, and the heads of all the brigades reached the fort almost at the same time. This first rush carried all the hostile line from the river to the fourth of the great traverses.

But Fort Fisher was not yet taken. The veteran garrison rallied, and then a contest began which for desperate intensity was unusual even in the Civil War. Bell's brigade was formed inside the work to fire on the rear of both its faces, while the first and second continued the task of driving the enemy from the remaining nine traverses of the land face. The interior was full of holes from which sand had been taken; in these the Confederates took cover and the fight settled down into one of the bloodiest kind of sharp shooting. The only way in which progress could be made at the traverses was to close with the enemy over their tops and around their bases. It was in this desperate work that the hardest fighting of the day was done. Officers seized muskets from dead hands and joined in the combat. Pennypacker had been desperately wounded as he was plant-

ing the flag of his regiment on the fifth traverse, Moore was killed at the first traverse, Curtis, with blood streaming from a wound in the face and musket in hand, remained fighting at the head of the men. General Ames himself, in the intervals of directing the battle, used a musket with effect. Every man was engaged.

By six o'clock, all but three of the traverses had been carried, and at seven, or soon after, Terry ordered up Abbott's brigade, upon whose arrival, all went forward together against the enemy, and before nine, Fort Fisher was in Union keeping.

The garrison retreated to the extreme end of Federal Point and being there hemmed in by Abbott, were to the number of 1,900 compelled to surrender. Forts Caswell and Johnson across the mouth of Cape Fear on the mainland surrendered the next day, bringing the captured artillery up to one hundred and sixty-nine guns, some of them the heaviest of the period.

The losses had been heavy for the numbers engaged, amounting to over 50 per cent of the officers and more than 25 per cent of the men on each side; the battle took front rank among Union victories. Grant ordered a hundred-gun salute in honor of it in each of his principal armies.

The day after the battle, Secretary Stanton who was returning from a consultation with Sherman at Savannah, ran his steamer in, and landed to hear the particulars. He personally thanked Admiral Porter, General Terry, General Ames and all the brigade commanders who survived, and ordered a list made of officers and men who had been conspicuous for good conduct. He breveted these officers and gave the men honorable mention in orders.

Side Lights on the Battle.

The deadly accuracy of the enemy's musketry as we formed in the plain within four hundred yards of the fort has been mentioned. In volume, it was not nearly so great as we had frequently been under in Virginia, but there was in it a murderous quality which was noted at the time even amid the fierce excitement of the charge. It was not a blind fire whistling and humming overhead, and the number of stricken men, increasing from moment to moment, showed how well the veterans on the ramparts could aim. Caps and clothing were pierced, swords and scabbards were hit, belts and canteen straps were cut.

The fire was the harder to endure because there was no way of replying to it and there was but little shelter in the shallow sand trench in which we were lying. The Confederate bullets kept continually hitting men in the lines, testing severely the endurance under fire of the troops, that highest attainment of good infantry and the last to be learned. Those veterans had learned it in their three and a half years of service.

The advance to the position from which the final rush was made was by the flank, right in front, the heads of column arriving first at the line on which deployment was to be made. A successive formation, "On the right by file into line" was therefore used to bring the 2nd and 3rd brigades into line for the attack. Though fifty years have passed, I well remember the good conduct of all as we passed from column of fours into line, each file as it took its place bringing the musket to "The Carry" as the drill prescribed, though men were falling all the while. Every officer and man was apparently more intent upon a nice execution of the movement than he was upon the advance we were about to make against the flaming hell in front. A soldier is nothing without drill and discipline. Lieutenants Smedley, Taylor and, I think Duffie, of the Ninety Seventh were all wounded while the line was being formed. Wainwright, Odiorne, Haines and the writer were all privileged to join in the final thronging rush that effected the lodgment in the fort. Odiorne, musket in hand, was killed on the parapet; Haines was there mortally wounded and the other two both wounded. Not one of the seven officers with the regiment escaped death or wounds.

The final advance was made in silence though here and there in the lines a few rugged soldiers gave vent to their feeling in a fierce Northern "hurrah" so different from the shrill slogan by which the men of the South were wont to utter their passion in battle. We had learned well what that yell meant. We had heard it often enough to know that when it was heard in volume, we would be instantly under a wasting musketry or be called upon to face a swift advance of a surging mass of "rebel" infantry that only the hardest fighting could stop.

The first colors planted on the works were two or three guidons of the 117th New York, but the first regimental flag I saw placed on the parapet, was that of the 97th Penn-

sylvania. It was in the hands of Col. Pennypacker who, after placing it on the fifth traverse, was immediately shot down by a Confederate marksman not twenty paces from him. I saw Col. John W. Moore of the 203rd Pennsylvania at the first traverse with Col. Pennypacker, and I heard the latter call as he took his flag from Color Bearer McCarty, "Moore, I want you to take notice that this is the flag of my old regiment." I had an impression at the time that Moore had the colors of his regiment in his hand when he fell with a bullet through his heart an instant after Pennypacker called to him. He was a veteran from the Army of the Potomac and had been in all its battles from 1861 up to September 1864. Col. Bell was killed at the head of his brigade just as it entered the fort. Curtis who was badly wounded in the face, was one of the first men on the parapet, and he remained with us until the end of the battle. He was six feet four inches in height, and a central figure in the close fighting at the traverses. General Ames exposed himself freely while directing the combat and encouraging the troops.

The troops who made the assault were of the old 10th corps and they had become used to the help of the navy at Fort Wagner in 1863, but the blue jackets had never before so honored us. The brave fellows couldn't understand how it was that common looking infantry in soiled uniforms had outfought them. They were told that we had learned the tricks of the trade.

The loss in officers was remarkable, fully equal, in proportion to the numbers engaged, to that at Franklin, Tenn., where it exceeded that of any other battle of the war.

In some of the smaller regiments, hardly an officer escaped wounds or death. In the 97th Pennsylvania, as has been said, of the seven officers engaged, two were killed and the other five were wounded. It was a battle in which the officers led and were followed by men who would go where their officers dared to lead.

The men who won this victory have been referred to as veterans. Yet all were young. Terry himself was hardly forty, Ames, if he was thirty, was but little more, Curtis hardly thirty-five. Bell was twenty-eight, Pennypacker twenty-one. Moore was twenty-five, while the staff officers and those of the line were nearly all not more than twenty-three.

Of these young men,—veterans in war,—only a few now survive. Thirty-three hundred made the assault; not more than two hundred are now living. The war was nearing its end when the battle was fought, and many a youth was looking forward to a speedy return to his home, to whose name at the next morning's roll call, the answer was returned, "Killed in the Assault." And in life's stern conflict since, nearly all the rest have gone down.

The youngest superior officer and almost the youngest man of that veteran division is still alive and comparatively well, at his home 300 South Tenth Street, Philadelphia; I refer to the gallant commander of the Second brigade, Col. Galusha Pennypacker, now Major General U. S. A., retired, who in the words of his commander spoken years after the battle, "was the real hero of Fort Fisher," and who for fifty years has passed no day free from pain on account of the desperate wounds received that day as his part of the price that was paid for the victory.

Curtis passed away some two years ago, and Bell fell and died in the assault at the head of his men. The fame of both is secure, for no account of the battle could be written without most prominent mention of their conspicuous gallantry, and no survivor of the desperate fighting at the traverses, could ever forget the leadership of Curtis.

The crisis of the day came, when the small first brigade, having lost the impetus of its first rush, was barely keeping its foothold on the west end of the parapet, while the enemy having repulsed the men of the navy at the sea angle, were moving a heavy column to drive out the intrusive infantry.

Then it was that Pennypacker, having carried the palisades towards the river, the sally port, and taken four hundred prisoners, wheeled the head of his large brigade to their left and advanced to support Curtis. He was barely in time; for Curtis' exhausted men were shaken in their morale, and the sight of the closely approaching enemy who were closing up to attack, caused some hesitation among Pennypacker's troops, and they paused in their advance.

It was here that the commander of the second brigade saved the day and became the hero of Fort Fisher. He saw that only example could carry the men forward, and with the colors of the 97th in his hand, and calling on his men to follow, he charged up the fifth traverse. His men swarmed after him, and though the leader fell, they broke

up the enemy's intended attack, turned the tide of battle at the traverses, and continued to gain ground there until the fort was won.

Major General Pennypacker served during the entire Civil War, was Major of his regiment, the 97th Pennsylvania; at nineteen, its Colonel at twenty, and Brigadier General U. S. V. at twenty-two. After the close of the Civil War, he was made Colonel of the 16th U. S. Infantry, and remained on the active list of the regular army until retired on account of wounds about 1883 with the Brevet of Major General.

General Pennypacker was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for distinguished bravery in this battle. This is the highest distinction that can be conferred upon an American soldier.

None but a soldier who served under him and followed wherever he led can appreciate his magnificent soldiership, which joined to his kindness to his inferiors, and to his spotless integrity made him indeed the officer without fear and without reproach.

Our prisoners felt the sting of defeat, but they were seasoned veterans; they had bravely done their duty and they indulged in no unavailing regrets. The fortune of war had decided against them and the feeling among them seemed to be one of relief that their task was done. In truth, the battle was fought in the shadow of the swiftly approaching end; both sides were feeling that there must soon be peace on all the continental wrestling floor, though neither could know how soon the curtain was to fall at Appomattox.

This premonition that the end was near did not weaken the Confederate fighting during the assault, but it did affect the conduct of both captors and captured, for that night when at ten o'clock, the surrender was announced, the fraternization of Federal and Confederate was immediate and complete. This was so in a marked degree, the next day while the prisoners, surrounded by a cordon of guards were waiting on the beach to go aboard the transports that were to carry them North.

Guards seemed unnecessary; there then took place that which was one of the very first reunions of the Blue and the Gray. It was a presage of that greater reunion which

was soon to take place at Appomattox and an evidence that the warring sections were even then drawing together.

Several of the captured regiments had been among our antagonists at Fort Wagner in 1863, and an exchange of experiences went on while our rations were being shared with the prisoners; they appreciated those Union rations, for those of the Confederacy in January 1865, were poor in quality and meager in quantity. Some had been captured with the fort and they were seen to be composed mostly of coarse corn meal, with some hard tack of poor quality. They had but little meat and not an ounce of sugar or coffee. It was almost pathetic to see how those iron-sided veterans took to the Union coffee. As they drank it, they were heard to say, "This is the first we've tasted since early in 1862." Those men had marched, toiled and fought during the last year of the war on rations which might have caused a mutiny had they been served to the Union Army.

We had long known this in a general way, but here was the fact before our eyes and there was not a man among the victors who did not thereby get an access of admiration for the gallant men whom the fortune of war had made our prisoners.

As to which side was right and which was wrong, the question was not discussed after the battle was over. It had been discussed on the deadly parapet and over the bloody traverses. Our brave foemen believed they were right; we on our part felt sure that the Union ought to win, but rough veterans, as both victors and vanquished were, each was careful of the others personal feelings. The traditions of the Southern gentleman even there cropped out while we, on our part out of pure respect and kindly feeling emulated their conduct. But all were real soldiers and always the bravest are the gentlest.

As I recall the campaign in Virginia in 1864, though the fighting was hard and bitter, there was a constant lessening of animosity among the troops on both sides. And with this there went a steadily growing respect for each other as soldiers. This was realized at Fort Fisher as never before; there, Federal and Confederate mingled as brother Americans; there was not a trace of bitterness. We did not see it then, but the new Union, cemented by the toil and blood of the men who fought the war was already in the hearts of victors and vanquished at Fort Fisher.



